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# Under Cover

By DAVID BURR, '52ba

THIS IS MY LAST COLUMN for *Sooner Magazine*. Nearly nine years ago I became editor and now it's time for someone else to do the job.

Perhaps the reader will bear with me if I review, from a personal standpoint, the past nine years with the *Sooner*.

In September of 1948, I was hired by the late Ted Beard to serve as an assistant on the magazine staff. Fresh from two years at Northeastern A&M, I was hired by Mr. Beard on faith and faith alone.

My training for the editorship was brief. Two months after I began work on the magazine, the editor resigned. I was available. I was hired. Mr. Beard again accepted me on faith; my first two months had not indicated a great talent.

I need to digress to indicate what kind of a magazine I found as editor. Students had served as editor for many years, and usually for no longer than one year. As a consequence, the magazine showed no steady development or planning, but did serve as an excellent training ground for journalism majors. Of necessity, the magazine was put together hastily and was a catch-all.

I served for nearly two years with Mr. Beard. At the end of my second year, he was stricken by the heart attack that proved fatal in April, 1950. Three months later, Boyd Gunning was appointed to serve as executive secretary.

Faith again played an important part in the decision to retain me as the editor. With very little knowledge of my potentialities, Mr. Gunning set the editorship up as a full time job and hired me for the task.

Now, the job was mine on a professional basis. There could be no excuses for work poorly done.

I assumed that the magazine could not be interesting unless the editor was interested in the people and events that were being offered up. To do my job properly I needed other people—alumni, students,

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faculty and administrators. Without them I had no story to write, no song to sing.

The subjects I dealt with offered me faith, also. They assumed that I would present their stories fairly and accurately. I had no interference or attempted censorship. I was free to develop the magazine and my capabilities.

I would have failed a great many people had the magazine not shown improvement. Perhaps you would be interested in the editorial philosophy that guided me through my editorship.

I decided there would be no taboos. That good taste and responsible reporting would be the guides to follow. There would be no sacred cows. After all, the magazine was published for thousands of people and not for a handful.

We would rid ourselves of the notion, widely held, that an alumni magazine should go to ridiculous extremes to flatter the subjects under discussion or the institution.

In short, the editorial philosophy was that alumni of the institution were educated people, intelligent, with interests that ranged from sports to intellectual stimulation, and that they should be treated with respect and honesty.

On this framework we built a magazine. And in the building many people took part. President Cross offered a part of the philosophy and a great deal of moral support through his interest. The Alumni Executive Board always gave the magazine close attention and support. Mr. Gunning wanted the best publication that could be provided. He offered the best working conditions and expected excellent results. No man could have done more to guide or encourage the editor.

The photographer for the magazine became excited with the notion of utilizing the magazine as a showcase for high quality pictures. The University Press offered advice and counsel; its hard-headed compositor through his interest and knowledge more than once saved the editor from mistakes.

As might be expected, the cooperation and faith detailed here paid off in a better magazine. In 1955 the American Alumni Council named the *Sooner* the alumni magazine-of-the-year, an honor no other institution west of the Mississippi has ever received.

In the next year, I will still be associated with the University, but not with the magazine. The young man who was my associate during the past year, Bill Fryday, will serve as editor. The same people will be there to help him that helped me. He will do an excellent job.